



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### ANNUAL SURVEY OF WATERFOWL BREEDING GROUNDS UNDERWAY

Studies which will serve as a basis for next fall's waterfowl hunting regulations are now getting underway, the U. S. Department of the Interior reported today. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel and cooperating technicians from state, private, and Canadian conservation organizations are moving into the field for the annual survey of the breeding grounds of North America's migratory waterfowl.

While last winter's inventory showed a decline in the breeding potential of the continent's waterfowl, Service officials point out that favorable conditions on the breeding grounds of the prairie states and in Canada could offset the drop in numbers noted in the winter census. Lack of water and poor breeding conditions, however, could cause a further decline.

Facts to be gathered this spring and summer by the breeding-ground surveyors will include the size and distribution of breeding flocks of waterfowl, the availability and distribution of water areas and ground cover for nesting and brood raising, and counts of the young birds produced. These facts will then be analyzed to give a complete picture of waterfowl in North America. When combined with the results of the mid-winter inventory they will form the basis for the hunting regulations for next fall.

Biologists engaged in the breeding ground studies also band large samples of birds in as many areas of the country as possible. The banding work is done to aid in delineating the flyways of the various species and to determine the time, routes, and period of migration. Such work also aids in studies of population turnover, age and sex ratios. The return of bands by hunters gives an index to hunting pressure and population survival.

Because it is physically impossible to make a complete coverage of the continent's vast breeding grounds, the Service and cooperating agencies determine population trends by surveying sample areas. The same areas are covered each year at about the same time and by the same method.

Dominion and Provincial wildlife conservation personnel are cooperating with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Canada -- serving as members of aerial crews doing census work by the transect method, and as members of ground parties which inspect breeding habitat, make brood counts, and record nesting data. Similar cooperation is being provided by state conservation agencies in the United States. Ducks Unlimited studies and banding in Canada will also supply important information to the Service.

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